



Center for the Study of Healthcare Provider Behavior

VA GREATER LOS ANGELES
HEALTHCARE SYSTEM



Associated Health Professions Postdoctoral Health Services Research & Development Fellowship Program at the Center for the Study of Healthcare Provider Behavior, VA HSR&D Center of Excellence

The VA Greater Los Angeles HSR&D Center of Excellence (COE) is a consortium of health services research programs at the Sepulveda and West Los Angeles campuses of the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (GLA), the University of California, Los Angeles, and the RAND Health Program. The COE is dedicated to the promotion of better health and healthcare for veterans through better understanding of healthcare provider behavior, the factors that influence it, and the health systems interventions that will improve it. To achieve this mission, Center investigators are committed to:

- Identifying theoretical and empirical models of healthcare provider behavior and quality care;
- Developing, refining and evaluating health systems interventions based on these models to improve the quality and outcomes of care;
- Developing health systems evaluation methods and tools;
- Training VA health services research Fellows and career development awardees about development, implementation and evaluation of health systems interventions;
- Disseminating resource and intervention materials, research results and recommendations to the VA health system and the American public;
- Supporting the development and implementation of the VA Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI); and
- Continuing to build appropriate infrastructure to support research, education and dissemination goals.

THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Fellowship program is intended to train creative, independent, ethical and productive leaders in health services research who will advance the VA's research agenda far into the future. The program's structure, intellectual climate and technical resources enable Fellows to progress in research areas relevant to the COE's mission and to do so in a timely, effective and enjoyable manner.

During their two-year tenures, Fellows are expected to maintain an ongoing relationship with one or more research mentors in order to achieve two core Fellowship goals:

1. Complete course work, as needed, in health services research, and
2. Conduct one or more health services research projects which merit presentation at meetings and publication in peer-reviewed journals.

A Fellow trained in fields or disciplines other than health services research (e.g., sociology, anthropology, and psychology) will likely benefit from UCLA-based training in selected core areas such as evaluation, quality improvement and biostatistics. This will assure sufficient grounding in areas directly related to a successful health services research career path.

Most didactic education takes place at the UCLA Schools of Medicine (Division of General Internal Medicine) and Public Health (Departments of Health Services and Epidemiology). Coursework can also be arranged with the UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research, which provides a rigorous and interdisciplinary social sciences curriculum. In addition to didactic course work, Fellows will participate alongside physician post-doctoral Fellows in seminars on health services research and Fellows' works in progress.

Developing capability in research is a core Fellowship goal, and toward that end, Fellows are expected to submit at least one paper for publication by the end of their two-year tenures. They typically follow a realistic timeline for achieving this goal:

Year 1

October	Preliminary Research Ideas to Program Mentor Identify Research Mentors
April	Present Research Protocol for Preliminary Approval to Program Director, Program Mentor, Research Mentors
June (by September of Year 2)	Final Protocol Submitted for Review to Protocol Committee Final Protocol Committee Meeting Final Protocol Approved

Year 2

January	Complete Data Collection
April	Complete Data Analysis Prepare Abstract for Presentation
June	Submit Paper for Publication

COE investigators are currently working on over 90 research projects in various stages of development or execution. Fellows should align themselves with one of many current principal areas of investigation, most notably:

- **QUERI Translation Research** (Brian Mittman, Elizabeth Yano, Lisa Rubenstein). Evaluation strategies for translating research into practice are being developed, including identifying the most effective research/evaluation designs and methods that lead to successful dissemination/implementation of positive findings. *VA Center of Excellence, VISN 22, MIRECC, RAND*
- **Primary Care** (Lisa Rubenstein, Elizabeth Yano). Studies evaluate variations in VA primary care delivery models over time and assess links between structure, quality of care, and health outcomes. *VA Center of Excellence*
- **Women's Health** (Donna Washington, Elizabeth Yano, Caroline Goldzweig, Claudine Armand [fellow], Rita Singal [fellow]). Projects focus on the structure of women veterans' health care services, patient preferences and PTSD in women veterans. *VA Center of Excellence*
- **Mental Health** (Lisa Rubenstein, Scott Sherman, Alexander Young, Bruce Naliboff, Paul Shekelle). Studies focus on improving care for depression, schizophrenia, and narcotic (opioid) dependence. *VA Center of Excellence, VISN 22 MIRECC, VA Mental Health QUERI, and RAND*
- **Evidence-Based Medicine** (Paul Shekelle). Studies focus on assessing the literature through meta-analysis and literature syntheses regarding spinal cord injury, CHF, and Ayurvedic medicine for diabetes, among others. *VA Center of Excellence and RAND*
- **End-of-Life and Frail Elderly** (Kenneth Rosenfeld, Karl Lorenz, Brian Mittman, Debra Saliba, Laurence Rubenstein). Projects focus on quality of care and cost-effectiveness, case management for Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's Disease quality of care. *VA Center of Excellence, VA GRECC, VA PADRECC, and RAND*

- **Patient Safety** (Peter Glassman). Current projects focus principally on pharmacy safety, including drug interaction reminders, improving prescribing patterns and cost-effectiveness. *VA Center of Excellence, UCLA and RAND*
- **HIV** (Steven Asch, Matthew Goetz, Henry Anaya). Projects focus on improving care for veterans with HIV, especially in the area of anti-retroviral therapy. *VA Center of Excellence, VA QUERI-HIV, and RAND*
- **Healthy Aging** (Lisa Rubenstein, Paul Shekelle, Larry Rubenstein). Projects identify and implement evidence-based interventions to improve function and reduce illness. *VA Center of Excellence, VA GRECC, and RAND*
- **Smoking Cessation** (Scott Sherman, Elizabeth Yano). Multi-site national studies identify health effects and prevalence of smoking among veterans and non-veterans and how to help them quit. *VA Center of Excellence*

Fellows will see first hand the extent to which health services research inquiries influence practice and policy, as well as have direct hands-on experience in using and applying both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods will include focus groups and structured interviews, etc. Quantitative methods will include research design, state-of-the-art survey design, data collection, and statistical analysis.

Fellows with research findings are expected to submit abstracts for presentation at a variety of scientific meetings. Prior to submission, all abstracts and presentations must be presented to the Fellow's Program and Research Mentors for comments and advice. At a minimum, Fellows must submit an abstract to the VA HSR&D Annual meeting during their final fellowship year. Fellows are also strongly encouraged to attend the annual national meetings of any specialty or discipline-focused organizations of which they are members (e.g., AHSR/HP, Society for Epidemiologic Research, Academy of Management, etc.).

Training Facilities

Fellows will have office space within the Center core at the Sepulveda campus of GLA. Fellows will have their own desks, computers, filing cabinets and phones, with ready access to Center technical and support staff.

VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System. While Fellows maintain office space in the COE core, they will spend significant time in other parts of the VA Greater Los Angeles, since much of the Center's ongoing research involves significant collaboration with other GLA clinical research centers. Chief among these are the centers for aging (GRECC), mental illness (MIRECC) and Parkinson's Disease (PADRECC).

Other VA Medical Centers. While not formal training sites per se, other Center collaborators at VA medical centers within and beyond Southern California are available to Fellows. COE investigators currently collaborate with other VA researchers on studies to:

- Improve care of depression (Northwest Center for Outcomes Research in Older Adults, Seattle VA HSR&D COE),
- Translate cancer research into practice (Colorectal Cancer QUERI)
- Describe and improve women veterans' health services; develop better nursing home care assessments (Center for Health Quality and Outcomes Research, Bedford VA HSR&D COE)

Program Directors and Preceptors

The Fellowship program is co-directed by Brian Mittman, Ph.D. and Elizabeth Yano, Ph.D. Dr. Mittman is well known for his work in health systems interventions and quality improvement in health care. During the past 3 years, he has worked closely with the VA Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI). The QUERI, jointly sponsored by the VA Office of HSR&D and the VA Office of Quality and Performance, represents a major commitment by the VA to translate research findings into practice. Dr. Mittman provides technical assistance and consultation to QUERI projects around the country and is working with QUERI leaders to develop a long-range program of QUERI cross-cutting research. This work provides numerous opportunities for Fellows interested in evidence-synthesis methods and the theory and practice of healthcare quality improvement and related topics. Dr. Mittman has taught Ph.D. and Masters-level courses in general management theory, healthcare management and quality improvement at the RAND Graduate School, Anderson Graduate School of Management at UCLA, and the School of Medicine at UC San Diego.

Trained as an epidemiologist at UCLA and health policy analyst at RAND, Dr. Elizabeth Yano has over 20 years of health services research and health care epidemiology experience, over 10 of which have focused on VA health care systems. Her research interests include evaluating primary care delivery models and the adoption of managed care arrangements and other practice features to improve the quality of care. Most recently she has assessed variations in organizational structure (e.g. primary care, women's health, HIV/AIDS) and their influence on medical center performance. These studies include measures of chronic disease quality of care, preventive practice and utilization of resources. Dr. Yano is also assessing interventions that aim to redesign practice to improve the processes and outcomes of care (e.g., depression, smoking cessation). She teaches Evaluation of Health Services in the UCLA School of Public Health Executive Masters Program (MPH for health professionals) and lectures in core courses required of all MPH, MSPH and Ph.D students.

Depending on which area of research they wish to pursue, Fellows will be assigned to one or two research mentors in addition to one of the Fellowship directors. Fellows will meet weekly with these individuals during intensive periods of project development. Mentors are charged with helping Fellows assemble protocol committees to review their research plans and assisting them in procuring sufficient resources to carry out their projects.

Evaluation

The Fellowship represents a shared responsibility. The program directors and mentors are responsible for providing the structure and advice that enable Fellows to acquire needed knowledge and skills. The Fellows are responsible for acquiring them. This means that Fellows should be devoting the majority of their time and effort to activities relevant to the program. Fellows' progress is formally charted via annual "social contracts" and quarterly reports.

Fellows begin their programs by first negotiating social contracts with the Fellowship directors. Thereafter, on an annual basis, Fellows send an updated social contract to the Fellowship directors and their research mentor(s), all of whom will review and sign it. The contracts constitute a formal statement of the Fellows' career goals, fellowship objectives, research project goals, other accomplishments, and what has, is or will be done to accomplish the immediate objectives.

Over and above the Fellowship social contract, Fellows prepare Cumulative Quarterly Activity Reports, which are submitted to the Fellowship directors and research mentor(s). These cumulative reports, organized by academic quarters, describe Fellows' specific activities (and the number of hours per week) devoted to research, coursework, informal learning, teaching, administration (relating to work other than their own research projects), and presentations.